A Wild Man

Mark 1:1-8
Sunday, September 7, 2003

[many words and concepts from this sermon come from Rev. Peter Hiett via: http://www.tsdowntown.com/component/preachit/message/the-wild-man]

This is nuts…you know…crazy…weird…this thing called following Jesus. I mean, isn't it strange? This guy says he is the Son of God, the Messiah, the Savior of the world. What do you do with that?

He grabs a handful of young guys and takes off around the country on a 3 year adventure (what were those guys thinking?!)

He heals people…the lame, sick, deaf, blind, mute, demon-possessed…
He forgives people…tax collectors, sinners, the unclean, adulterers, and prostitutes…
He teaches people…about the kingdom of God…in the synagogue and on hillsides and from boats and in the crowds and at dinner.

He used parables *"so that the Scriptures might be fulfilled:*
'They see what I do,
but they don't really see;
they hear what I say,
but they don't understand.'" (Luke 8:10)

So the intention was that they wouldn't get it? Man that's wild!

Not only that, but he willing went to his death for a crime he did not commit, a sin he never succumbed to, and a penalty he did not procure. He died an agonizing death. He was crucified…and we call this Good Friday. Weird.

Not only that, but 3 days later there came reports that he had risen…from the dead. First from the women, then 2 guys who were walking down the Emmaus Road, then some of the apostles, then all of the apostles, than some more of the disciples, until finally they say he ascended into heaven…okay…

Now 2,000 some odd years later we subscribe to this theory, this eyewitness account, this miracle of miracles, this faith…and we call this our salvation and we build our lives around it…we have got to be out of our minds. Now that's wild!

Jesus, called the Christ. Either he is a raving lunatic, a phony; an outright liar or deceiver; or he is telling the truth:

"I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life…no man comes unto the Father but by me."

Great! Just great, Jesus! …that's not politically correct! …that's rather exclusive! …that's wild! Why don't you just put yourself in the way!!

And that's what he does…
Is He in your Way?
Is He your Truth?
Is He your Life?

Well anyway…

Mark 1:1

Verse 1-4a: *"Here begins the Good News about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God. In the book of the prophet Isaiah, God said,*
"Look, I am sending my messenger before you, and he will prepare your way. He is a voice shouting in the wilderness: 'Prepare a pathway for the Lord's coming! Make a straight road for him!'" This messenger was John the Baptist. He lived in the wilderness…
Verse 6: *His clothes were woven from camel hair, and he wore a leather belt; his food was locusts and wild honey."*

John the Baptist was a wild man. The wilderness was his home. Camel's hair and leather were his clothing. And locust and wild honey was his dinner. He was a wild man.

John was one among many wild men in Scripture. Isaiah the prophet prophesied that this man was the Elijah who was to come. Isaiah, you will remember in Isaiah 20, was the one who spent three years walking around naked and barefoot as a sign to the nations!! Now that's wild!

Elijah, you will also remember, was known as the wilderness prophet, who wore a leather garment, was fed by ravens, called down fire from heaven, and left this earth on a chariot of fire.

Another prophet, Ezekiel, lay on his left side for a year, then on his right for 40 days and was commanded to cook his food over human dung! C'mon Ezekiel, that's gross! But it is wild! John ate locusts!

That's wild! John ate what Israel feared, locusts. Locusts were one of the ten plagues God used against Egypt. They destroyed much of the land of Egypt. Locusts also destroyed crops in Israel. Joel describes locusts:

> *"Before them peoples are in anguish, all faces grow pale; like warriors they charge, like soldiers they scale the wall."*

But John devoured them!

In Revelation, demon locusts from the pit of hell (or gehena) are among some of the final judgments upon planet earth. And John ate them for lunch! That's wild!

Men of old…wild men…those who are restrained by the like of civilization. You know what I'm talking about…have you ever encountered a new believer?

You know…one of those barbarian followers of Jesus Christ who don't know all the rules yet? We civilized Christians cringe at the thought of how unschooled their methods are.

You know…one of those barbarian followers of Jesus Christ who haven't been indoctrinated or coached on what it means to be a "normal, average, church-going, nice, upstanding" Christian? We civilized Christians admire their passion and their heart, but ask them not to wear shorts in the building.

You know…one of those barbarian followers of Jesus Christ who actually believe that when they speak to God he speaks back, when they ask, he answers, when they give they receive, and when they serve they are serving Jesus Christ…

> *"…for what you have done unto the least of these my brethren, you have done it to me."*

Well anyway…not only was John a barbarian, but his message was also wild:

Verse 4: "*He lived in the wilderness and was preaching that people should be baptized to show that they had turned from their sins and turned to God to be forgiven."*

Meaning—baptism was a display of repentance.

And because John's message was wild:

Verse 5: *"People from Jerusalem and from all over Judea traveled out into the wilderness to see and hear John. And when they confessed their sins, he baptized them in the Jordan River."*

John yells, "Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand…make straight in the desert a highway." Some say that he meant by that, "Get your life in order." Perhaps he meant more, "Let go of your order."

Not "get your stuff together,"
But "forget about your stuff."
Not "get civilized,"
But "get uncivilized."

John was hardly civilized. "Let go of all your attachments; clean out your heart; get everything off the highway, because somebody's comin'! Repent, be baptized, wash this world away, get wild!"

Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region round about the Jordan were going out to him. Isn't that weird? I mean, he's wild…

John was a wild man with a wild message and people were drawn to it…Why?

Well, we all like wild things don't we? That's why we like going to the zoo…to see lions and tigers and rattlesnakes and killer whales. That's why we like to live here in the Northwoods; in town, out on a lake, or in the woods…with deer and bears and raccoons and squirrels and mighty muskeys. That's why we like to go to the movies…cowboys and gladiators and war heroes and epic battles. Rambo and James Bond and William Wallace…"FREEDOM!!" Wild!!

John Eldredge, in his book Wild At Heart, argues that deep in his heart, every man longs to be a wild man with a battle to fight, an adventure to live, and a beauty to rescue. That is how he bears the image of God; *John says*, and that is what God made him to be.

Just think…God really made this world safe didn't he? Kodiak grizzlies…mountain lions…porcupines. He rigged this world for adventure and placed man in the middle of it and called it GOOD! That's awesome! That's wild. And God made men to be wild!

[Singing]

Get your motor running
Get out on the highway
Lookin' for adventure
Or whatever comes my way…

Oh darlin' gonna make it happen,
Put your world in a love embrace
Fire all of your guns at once and explode into space…
Like a true nature's child, we were born, born to be wild…
Born to be wild!!

Men are Born to be Wild!!

…And chicks dig 'em!

Oh yeah…mother's want their daughters to marry Mr. Rodgers types, but they know that they are attracted to wild men.

There's something about a man, fighting for the heart of a woman. But when a woman gives herself to a man with that kind of wild strength he has the power to either set them free or to imprison them. That's a wild gamble! Some call it too great of a risk and seek to find a 'gentle' man. Others take the gamble and call it romance!!

Remember we are feminine and God is masculine. He is the groom and we are his bride. The Bride of Christ.

Well, as I was saying…chicks dig wild men so they marry the wild men. But they are afraid of the wild man so they tame the wild man. After they do, they go see a counselor. They complain: "The romance has gone out of my marriage."

So bride of Christ, how is your marriage? How is your walk with Jesus? Is it boring?

Well, all of the people were going out to see John the Baptist in the wilderness. It seems they wanted something to repress the shame, guilt, and fear that plagued their lives. You know… Guys don't say it, but they think it: "Hey, honey, work sucks, the kids are messed up, and I think I'm getting addicted to porn. Maybe we ought to go to church. I need some repression." We think religion fixes the problem of our hearts.

In his seminal work Civilization and Its Discontents, Sigmund Freud taught that civilization is dependent upon constrained (repressed) desires. For if we acted on the deepest desires of our hearts, we'd devour each other. Therefore, our only hope for civilization, taught Freud, is repression of desire through fear, guilt, and shame: civilization and its discontents.

So we go to church to seek the repression we need so we don't feel so guilty and afraid. You see, religious people hate the truly wild man, because he is not repressed by them.

When John saw the Sadducees and Pharisees coming he said:

"You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not think that you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. The axe is ready at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire."

Don't repress your passion…but surrender your passion.

Don't manage your sins…but confess your sins.

Perhaps it's not the things repressed which are the greatest evil, but the fact that we repress them: that is, hide our hearts from *The Wild Man*.

Then John makes this announcement:

Verse 7-8: *"Someone is coming soon who is far greater than I am—so much greater that I am not even worthy to be his slave. I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit!"*

John was wild, but not wild enough. He was a barbarian, but not barbaric enough:

Matthew 3:11 – *"I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with*

fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

John was wild, but he was not The Wild Man.

The Wild Man's name is Jesus!

Now some of you may be saying: "I can relate to this wild man thing, but, Jesus?! Wild?! C'mon…no way. I remember him is Sunday school on the flannel graph. He's meek and mild and BORING! He is in the pictures with the long flowing hair, the lamb and the lion laying next to him, and children dancing around him."

Dorothy Sayers wrote:
"The people responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus never accused him of being a bore—on the contrary: they thought him too dynamic to be safe. It has been left for later generations to muffle up that shattering personality and surround him with a yawning ho-hum atmosphere of tedium. We have efficiently trimmed the claws of the Lion of Judah, certified him 'meek and mild,' and recommended him as a fitting household pet for pale curates and pious old ladies."

1 – Well, Jesus was *more wild* than John.

- Jesus gave the Scribes and Pharisees the worst tongue-lashing.
- Jesus baptized not with water but the Spirit that is fire.

2 – Jesus was *more wild* than John.

Not even death could contain Him. In fact, Jesus was the first truly wild man. Ever since Adam, humanity had been enslaved and trapped. Jesus is the new Adam, and none has ever been so wild.

He is the Lion of Judah!

You'll remember in The Chronicles of Narnia He's Aslan the Lion. The children ask if He's safe, and Mr. Beaver exclaims, "Safe? 'Course he isn't safe. But he's good."

The Lion of Judah is not a tame lion, but He's good. The problem is His Bride is not so good, and so He makes her nervous. When she's afraid, she tries to tame Him, and make Him safe, controlled, and predictable.

I heard of a woman's dream. In the dream, a lovely woman was asleep in her bed. In shock, the dreamer then saw a great lion. She thought it would eat the woman. It put its immense teeth next to her throat and then licked her face and lay down beside her. As it lay there, a demon entered the room. And the lion jumped up and devoured the demon.

John ate locusts; Jesus eats demon locusts from Hell.

3 – Jesus is *more wild* than John. Followers of Jesus cite a living wild man!

Ezra Pound wrote about Christ, called the Ballad of the Goodly Fere. It is written from the perspective of one of the men who followed Christ, perhaps Simon Zelotes, and it'll make a whole lot more sense if you know that fere is an Old English word that means mate, or companion: (See attached story…)

4 – Jesus is *far more wild* than John.

If John prepared the highway, Jesus rides His Harley right down the middle of it, and He wants you on the back.

You see, Jesus not only leaves civilization, He leaves the throne of Heaven, naked of all His glory. He sneaks into the dragon's castle where His Bride is sleeping in bondage. He makes Himself His Bride's baby, and traps her with love. And He sets a trap for the Evil One himself.

The Lion is a Lamb.

Having all power, life, and glory in perfect freedom, He lays it all down. He takes the poison fruit of His Bride; He bears her dead heart; He embraces the fallen world with love; He "becomes sin for us" and yells to the dragon, "Do your worst!"

The Lamb is slain and descends into Hell, into the belly of the dragon, bearing every sin, every wound, every sorrow, every tear of the one He loves. There He fires all of His guns at once and *explodes* into space! That is, on the third day, He rose to baptize us with His fire—His Spirit. He is *the* Wild Man, and He makes us wild too.

You see…He is in you. He has given you a new heart. You no longer have to be a slave to the old one, with its insatiable desires. Your new heart reflects the wildness of Christ in it.

He not only forgives us our sins;
He gives us His Spirit.

He not only crucifies our old hearts;
He gives us new hearts.

He not only rescues us;
He sets us free.

He makes us wild!

Christianity is not just repressing your old desires but dying to your old desires and getting new ones. Or better yet, baptizing your old desires with fire until they're pure like gold.

You know…in God's kingdom, no one is repressed. Heaven is a wild, uninhibited dance of absolute joy. Jesus said, *"I came that my joy might be in you."* Heaven is at hand, and we can begin to live there *now* by faith in Christ Jesus. *"For freedom Christ has set us free,"* wrote Paul. *"Let us not submit again to a yoke of slavery."*

If you've put your faith in Christ as your Savior and Lord, He's given you a new heart and an immeasurable greatness of power.

You are a dragon slayer! You're dangerous! The Lion is in you. So Satan's only hope is to tame you with lies. The lies appeal to your old heart full of fear, so you'll shut down your new heart full of love. And love is God.

Our old heart says,

"Be cautious . . . be anxious . . . be afraid . . . don't screw up! Stay in control at all times." It worries, "Should I go here? …should I go there? …should I take this job?"

Every move is calculated and measured.

Have you ever tried to dance like that? It's not fun and it's not wild. So occupied with yourself, you can't hear the music. It's scary living with this new heart. We seem to always want formulas and instruction on how to use this new heart. But Jesus seems to say continually:

"Trust me. Follow me. Use your new heart."

Right, but that is so frustrating.

- It's scary using your new heart. It's unpredictable and unscripted.
- It's scary being free. Who knows what will happen?
- It's a frightening thing to love from the heart without constraint. For in this world, if you love like Jesus loved, you can often find yourself crucified.

You know who the wild men are?

They are hanging on crosses in prison cells in China…amidst persecution in Muslim countries…and yet a husband and his wife and their 8 month old little girl wake up in the morning and look out their window at a city of 2 million people and pray that they will all come to faith in Jesus Christ!

It's very frightening to love. But love is stronger than death, and nothing is more wild. For love is God, and God is not *at all* repressed. And God is in you.

Children of God, stop listening to shame. Stop running in fear.

Gordon Dalby tells about a man plagued by fear and a recurring nightmare in which a ferocious lion kept chasing him until he dropped exhausted and woke screaming. He went to his pastor, and the pastor invited him to recall the dream, in his office, even in all its fear.

Hesitantly, the man agreed and soon reported that indeed, the lion was in sight and headed his way. The pastor then instructed the man, "When the lion comes close to you, try not to run away, but instead, stand there and ask him who or what he is, and what he's doing in your life…can you try that?"

Shifting uneasily in his chair, the man agreed, then reported what was happening. "The lion is snorting and shaking his head, standing right there in front of me…I ask him who he is…and—Oh! I can't believe what he's saying! He says, 'I'm your courage and your strength. Why are you running away from me?'"

Men of God, stop running from Jesus. He wants to make you wild. Don't be tamed by fear, but let "the love of Christ constrain you." Move you. Use your new heart. The law helps you know when you're *not* using it. Are you looking at porn? Are you cheating in your business? Are you having an affair? Are you greedy? Then you're not using it.

Don't panic. Don't just repress it, but confess it. Baptize it with fire…give it up, then use your new heart. Jesus didn't come to only forgive us our sins and say, "All right Mavis, try again. Try *harder!* Be more repressed next time," like some college coach from gehena. Jesus came that we might have *life* and have it abundantly.

The Wild Man came, hung on the cross, and drew all men unto himself. Our joy is his suffering. His resurrection is our newness of life. We are born again to be wild!!

[talking/singing]
O darlin' gonna make it happen
Put your world in a love embrace
Fire all of your guns at once and explode into space…
Like a true nature's child…we are born to be wild

You are born again to be wild!!

Women, don't be afraid of wild men like Jesus. They're the ones you long for; so wild they'll hang on a cross and sacrifice everything for you. And they won't settle for just your body. They want your freely given, naked heart. That's romance. Yes, it's scary, but it's good.

I read about a repressed nun in her mid-30's. She never sang, never smiled, laughed, or danced. In prayer she had a vision of a large ballroom filled with people:

"I was sitting by myself on a wooden chair, when a man approached me, took my hand, and led me onto the floor. He held me in his arms and led me in the dance. The tempo of the music increased and

we whirled faster and faster. The man's eyes never left my face. His radiant smile covered me with warmth, delight, and a sense of acceptance. Everyone else on the floor stopped dancing. They were staring at us.

"The beat of the music increased and we pirouetted around the room in reckless rhythm. I glanced at his hands, and then I knew. Brilliant wounds of a battle long ago, almost like a signature carved in flesh. The music tapered to a slow, lilting melody and Jesus rocked me back and forth. As the dance ended, he pulled me close to him. And he whispered in her ear? … 'Christine, I'm wild about you.'"

People of God, Jesus is wild about you! He wants you to be wild about him too! He charges you to fix your eyes on Him the author and finisher of our faith. The Wild Man himself!

Bride of Christ, the **Church**…in the spirit of exhortation:

As I said at the beginning: This is nuts…you know…this thing called following Jesus. This isn't normal. The world tells you that all roads lead to God, just as long as you are a good person. People are going to think you are out of your mind. That's right! We are! We're barbarians. We are not normal. And any attempt to be normal, average, or civilized is compromising the relationship we have with Christ.

Did you know that animals have names for them as a group?
Bees are called…a swarm
Cows are called…a herd
Do you know what a group of crows are called? …murder
Do you know what a group of buzzards are called? …a committee
Flamingos are called…flamboyant

But my favorite is a group of rhinos. Did you know that rhinos can run at speeds of 30mph? But they can only see 30ft in front of them?
So do you know what they are called? …a crash! Isn't that great! That's what I want to be!

And as a church, may we be a pack of rhinos, together running 30mph and only seeing 30ft in front of us. Because those who say they can see 20 years in the future are lying. The future is uncertain. Besides, with a pack of rhinos…crashing…running 30mph, whatever is at 31ft better get out of the way!!

So let us leave the trappings of civilized Christianity and follow the wild way of Jesus with men like John the Baptist as our forerunners. Because, with our new hearts, we are not at all repressed. Let's pray…

Now listen. Before you go.

So, when you're out there…and you find yourself on the highway…and things get wild…
Get you motor running

You're right where Jesus wants you. Don't be afraid…use your new heart…and be wild.

So by way of benediction:

Born to be Wild [song]

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